



Status Update

MAR 23 1993

March 1993

SPRING ELECTION?

Message from the Chairperson

At the time of writing, all indications pointed to a spring election. Political pundits are suggesting May or June as possible months. Of course, the federal Tory leadership convention could change that. But what matters is that those who are interested in bringing about change recognize the opportunities that come with the election process.

Now is the time to determine what candidates stand for. Now is the time to seek commitment anew from your MLA. Likewise, now is the time to test the views of the Premier and his potential successors.

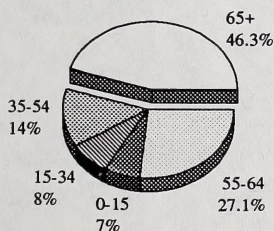
Individuals finding themselves in positions of power when the dust settles will be faced with the gargantuan task of balancing the budget. The potential for other issues to be lost in the process is a real possibility. That's why it's so important to set your item on the agenda before, rather than after.

Failing to do so could mean a four year wait.

Gary McPherson, Chairperson

Did You Know...

...Almost half of Canadians with disabilities are 65 and older?



1991 HALS

Response to ATA Report

The Premier's Council has insisted, since its inception, that every child has the right to an integrated education with his peers, in his own community, regardless of ability, unless it can be shown that such an education is not to his/her benefit. On most levels, the Alberta Teachers' Association recently released document *Trying to Teach* does not appear to oppose that view.

Trying to Teach is a report that attempts to illustrate teachers' concerns with the current situation and direction of education in Alberta. Integration of students with disabilities is one of the areas it deals with. Unfortunately, *Trying to Teach* does not rely on a statistical breakdown of submissions, and instead relies on nebulous accounting terms such as "In many instances, teachers expressed support...". Nevertheless, if one is to extract some impressions from the document and, in particular, the section on integration, they might be as follows.

- Integration is the area of greatest concern.
- Overall, the majority of submissions reflect an agreement with the principle of integration.
- The agreement in principle is qualified with the concern that integration is not working due to a number of barriers.
- The greatest barriers to successful integration are lack of supports, resources, and training.
- Unsuccessful integration results in a loss for the student with the disability, non-disabled students, and educators.
- Integration should not result in a lower standard of education for non-disabled students.
- Students with behavioural disorders seem to cause the greatest disruption in the classroom.

- Teachers want to be consulted and involved in the integration process.

The ATA Special Education Council concluded that "Students with special needs can be successfully integrated into the regular classroom. Successful integration depends upon factors such as an understanding of the process, sufficient preparation time, training of educators, students and parents, effective service delivery and ongoing evaluation."

The bottom line seems to be that while Alberta teachers see integration is a worthy goal, in order for it to work, they need a great deal more support than what they're receiving. This doesn't seem to be unreasonable.

Trying to Teach outlines concerns from real people working the front lines. Despite the negative flavour of some comments, it seems like good advice when taken as a whole. Anyone listening? ●

To obtain a copy of *Trying to Teach*, contact the Alberta Teacher's Association, 11010 - 142 Street, Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1 tel. 453-2411

Status Update

Status Update is a quarterly fact sheet designed to supplement the Premier's Council's newsletter, *Status Report*. *Status Update* is intended to inform readers of the activities of the Premier's Council, as well as provoke discussion about issues facing persons with disabilities. We welcome comments and suggestions from our readers at any time. Please address your correspondence to:

The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities
250, 11044 - 82 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 0T2
Phone (403) 422-1095
Toll Free 1-800-272-8841

Taxi Woes

For the uninitiated, Alberta Transportation currently has two wheelchair accessible taxi pilot projects on the go. While one is off to a great start, the other appears to be falling flat on its face.

According to Dave Gaze, manager of Medicine Hat transit, the taxi project in that city is doing just fine. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the project in Edmonton. In fact, things are so bad that the pilot may be moved to another city.

Yellow Cab, which operates the service, says drivers are reluctant to operate accessible cabs because they believe they can't make enough income. A large part of the problem seems to be "dead heading". The accessible cab is often redirected by dispatch to a call quite distant from its last trip. A regular cab usually picks up its next fare in the same vicinity as its last fare.

This has translated into the company making only one of four cabs available, and on a limited basis (a second cab was to be brought on line March 1). In turn, consumers have told the Premier's Council about being unable to book a cab when they would like it, and sometimes not at all. This certainly isn't what the service was intended to be - accessible taxis, available 24 hours a day.

To make matters worse, Yellow Cab intends to abandon the service if the situation doesn't improve.

Is there a solution? The recent public outcry over DATS' inability to meet consumer demand might provide part of the answer. Many disabled consumers coming into contact with the Council say that DATS has been used, in many cases, like a taxi. Clearly, this is no longer fiscally possible. And if people are unwilling to use the new low-floor bus technology which will be available in the fall, accessible cabs may be the only alternative.

It would be a shame if they had disappeared by then. ●

Is Edmonton on the verge of losing its accessible taxi pilot project?



VRDP Pilot Transfer Project

By the end of March 1993, everything should be in place for Advanced Education and Career Development (AE&CD) to take responsibility for providing vocational rehabilitation services to clients in the Red Deer area who have been served by Family and Social Services (FSS).

Over the next year, both AE&CD and FSS staff will work together to transfer responsibility between departments. In addition, many people with disabilities in the central region of Alberta who have not had vocational services will be able to access the Career Development Centre services of AE&CD that already exist for other Albertans.

AE&CD staff in Red Deer have been developing a new package of vocational services that will attempt to merge the existing services of two departments into one comprehensive group of services. This should open up some new options in the areas of career exploration, post-secondary training, and training on the job.

The Evaluation Committee for the pilot project recently visited the pilot sites: Cosmos Enterprises and Human Resource Development Bureau in Red Deer, and the Lacombe Action Group from Lacombe. In addition to learning what services are currently delivered by these agencies, the Committee was able to learn about services at Red Deer College that AE&CD is already funding for similar groups of clients.

Probably the greatest difference observed between clients now served by AE&CD and those served by FSS is the need for long term follow-up. The pilot agencies confirmed that this long term support is cyclical for most clients, increasing when there are job changes and decreasing when working conditions are stable.

The evolution of vocational training in FSS funded agencies has progressed so rapidly in the last four or five years that most clients are already receiving their training at work sites rather than in segregated workshops. For clients, changes during the pilot phase should be minimally disruptive, and some will find improved opportunities available to them. ●

Coming Events

Learning Disabilities Association Ontario presents I Have the Right: Invisible No Longer. April 28 to May 1, 1993, in Toronto, Ontario. Theme: discussion of a wide range of issues for people with learning disabilities. Contact: Mary-Gayle Goebel at (416) 487-4106.

Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital presents Changing the Face of Empowerment: The Challenge for Human Service Providers. May 6 and 7, 1993, at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in Edmonton. Theme: all aspects of service provision for people with disabilities. Contact: Social Work Department at 471-7989.

People First of Canada presents the 3rd International People First Conference. June 25 to 29, 1993, in Toronto, Ontario. Theme: A Celebration of Stories. Contact: Verlyn Rowett, People First of Canada, Kinsmen Building, York University, 4700 Keele Street, North York, Ontario M3J 1P3 tel. (416) 661-9611.

National Access Awareness Week. May 31 to June 6 across Canada. Provincial theme: access to recreation. Contact: Mike Keeping, Provincial Coordinator, 700, 9919 - 105 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1B1 tel. 420-0898 toll free 1-800-661-NAAW.

In the next issue of Status Report:

- Breakthroughs in Schizophrenia
- Community Supports Update

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**People First of Ca
3rd International
Conference. June**
Toronto, Ontario.
of Stories. Contact
People First of Can
Building, York Un
Street, North York
tel. (416) 661-961

National Access A
May 31 to June 6 a
Provincial theme:
Contact: Mike Kee
Coordinator, 700, 9
Edmonton, Alberta
0898 toll free 1-80

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